

***Amendments to the Claims***

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. - 15. (Cancelled)

16. (Currently Amended) A system for packet classification, comprising:

a pre-processor configured ~~to receive a packet header of an incoming packet, the packet header including a field, and~~ to assign an associated identifier to ~~[[the]]~~ a field within a header of an incoming packet;

a first memory ~~device, the first memory~~ device including a first set of binary patterns;

a second memory ~~device, the second memory~~ device including a second set of binary patterns, ~~the associated identifier being selected from either the first set of binary patterns or the second set of binary patterns;~~

a third memory ~~device, the third memory~~ device including instructions ~~for processing each of~~ configured to process the first set of binary patterns and the second set of binary patterns; and

a processor configured to match the associated identifier with ~~a corresponding pattern~~ one or more patterns from either the first set of binary patterns or the second set of binary patterns using a range of values associated with each of the first set of binary patterns and the second set of binary patterns and to process ~~the incoming packet the one or more patterns~~ in accordance a priority computation to determine which with an

~~instruction associated with a matched pattern~~ one of the instructions is to be used to process the incoming packet.

17. (Original) The system of claim 16, wherein the field is a network address.

18. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 16, further comprising:

a fourth memory ~~device, the fourth memory~~ device configured to store a result corresponding to the matched pattern received from the processor.

19. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 16, further comprising:

means for determining priority among the one or more ~~matched~~ patterns.

20. (Currently Amended) A method for packet classification, comprising:

~~receiving a packet header of an incoming packet, the packet header including a field;~~

assigning an associated identifier to ~~[[the]]~~ a field within a header of an incoming packet;

maintaining a first set of binary patterns in a first memory device and a second set of binary patterns in a second memory ~~device, device;~~ the associated identifier being selected from either the first set of binary patterns or the second set of binary patterns;

matching the associated identifier with ~~a corresponding pattern~~ one or more patterns from either the first set of binary patterns or the second set of binary patterns using a range of values associated with each of the first set of binary patterns and the second set of binary patterns; and

processing ~~the incoming packet~~ the one or more patterns in accordance a priority computation to determine which ~~with an instruction associated with a matched pattern~~ one of the instructions is to be used to process the incoming packet.

21. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for packet classification, comprising:

(a) a processor array containing a plurality of processing elements, wherein each processing element is configured to: (i) compare a classification record derived from an incoming packet with one or more patterns associated with rules to be enforced by performing programmed relational operations, and (ii) capture state information in a shift register that is shared by more than one of the processing elements;

(b) an instruction decoder configured to suspend operations for a set of the processing elements and to restart operations for the set of processing elements;

(c) at least one priority encoder configured to determine a highest priority from the state information from the shift registers; and

(d) a record memory ~~that is~~ configured to be addressed for read and write capabilities, wherein writes are executed to indicate which of several simultaneously processed packets is being submitted to the apparatus for packet classification, and wherein reads are executed to indicate which bit or bits are to be provided to the processor array from all of the simultaneously processed packets.

22. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 21, wherein the programmed relational operations include at least one of a group consisting of: an equality operation, less than or equal to operations, and greater than or equal to operations.

23. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 21, further comprising:  
an instruction memory containing instructions configured to: (i) select which bit or bits of the simultaneously processed packets are to be examined by the processor array, and (ii) determine how the selected bit or bits are to be compared against one or more of the patterns.

24. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the instructions in the instruction memory are a classification program, wherein the classification program contains further instructions to divide the classification program into subsets of sequential instructions, each of which represents a subset of [[the]] rules defined by the classification program.

25. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 24, wherein a prioritized relationship exists between a pair of the subsets of the rules defined by the classification program.

26. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 24, wherein the record memory is configurable to be rewritable during execution of the classification program such that a result from the priority encoder ~~can be~~ is subsequently examined by the classification program.

27. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 26, wherein the result includes [[the]] a current highest priority match as determined by the priority encoder.

28. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 24, wherein one or more bits selected from one of the classification records in the record memory [[can]] determine a subset of instructions in the classification program to apply to one or more of the classification records.

29. (Original) The apparatus of claim 28, wherein the one or more bits selected are selected under programmed control.

30. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 28, further comprising:  
a first memory device configured to store a first subset of the one or more patterns; and  
a second memory device configured to store a second subset of the one or more patterns, wherein the classification program retrieves the first subset of the one or more patterns while the second subset of the one or more patterns is being updated. ~~can be seamlessly updated.~~

31. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 28, ~~wherein~~ further comprising:  
means for increasing [[the]] an effective size of the classification program ~~can be increased.~~

32. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 28, ~~wherein~~ further comprising:

means for scaling a [[the]] number of processing elements applied to a single incoming packet ~~can be sealed~~.

33. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 28, ~~wherein~~ further comprising:

means for scaling a [[the]] number of simultaneously processed packets ~~can be sealed~~.

34. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 28, ~~wherein~~ further comprising:

means for scaling a [[the]] number of packet bits used to select a classification program ~~can be sealed~~.

35. (Original) The apparatus of claim 28, wherein multiple instances of the apparatus are cascaded such that a first instance of the apparatus feeds into a second instance of the apparatus.

36. (Original) The apparatus of claim 21, wherein multiple instances of the apparatus are cascaded such that a first instance of the apparatus feeds into a second instance of the apparatus.